

service as public safety officers—that there is a well established support system in place to comfort and assist their families and loved ones in the event that they die in the line of duty.

Mr. President, it is critical that we not only remember, but offer real help to the families of those police officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our streets and homes safe.

PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS EDUCATIONAL ASSISTANCE ACT OF 1998

Mr. ALLARD. I ask unanimous consent that the Senate now proceed to the consideration of calendar 359, S. 1525.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The clerk will report.

The bill clerk read as follows:

A bill (S. 1525) to provide financial assistance for higher education to the dependents of Federal, State, and local public safety officers who are killed or permanently and totally disabled as the result of a traumatic injury sustained in the line of duty.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Is there objection to the immediate consideration of the bill?

There being no objection, the Senate proceeded to consider the bill.

Mr. ALLARD. Mr. President, I ask unanimous consent the bill be considered read the third time and passed, the motion to reconsider be laid upon the table, and that any statements relating to the bill appear at this point in the RECORD.

The PRESIDENT pro tempore. Without objection, it is so ordered.

The bill (S. 1525) was deemed read the third time, and passed, as follows:

S. 1525

Be it enacted by the Senate and House of Representatives of the United States of America in Congress assembled,

SECTION 1. SHORT TITLE.

This Act may be cited as the “Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998”.

SEC. 2. FINANCIAL ASSISTANCE FOR HIGHER EDUCATION TO DEPENDENTS OF PUBLIC SAFETY OFFICERS KILLED OR PERMANENTLY AND TOTALLY DISABLED IN THE LINE OF DUTY.

Part L of the Omnibus Crime Control and Safe Streets Act of 1968 (42 U.S.C. 3796 et seq.) is amended—

(1) in the heading for subpart 2, by striking “**Civilian Federal Law Enforcement**” and inserting “**Public Safety**”;

(2) in section 1211(1), by striking “civilian Federal law enforcement” and inserting “public safety”;

(3) in section 1212(a)(1)(A), by striking “Federal law enforcement” and inserting “public safety”;

(4) in section 1216(a), by inserting “and each dependent of a public safety officer killed in the line of duty on or after October 1, 1997,” after “1992.”; and

(5) in section 1217—

(A) by striking paragraph (2); and

(B) by redesignating paragraphs (3) and (6) as paragraphs (2) and (3), respectively.

Mr. BIDEN. Mr. President, I am pleased that the Senate has passed S. 1525, the “Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998.”

Last congress, the Senate passed the “Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act”—led by Senators SPECTER and KOHL and co-sponsored by myself and nearly every member of the Judiciary Committee. This law provides for the education of the spouse and dependent children of federal law enforcement officers who die or are totally disabled in the line of duty.

The purpose of the legislation was to remove a significant financial burden from the families of these deceased officers and to allow them to continue on the educational path they would have followed had their parent or spouse not been killed in the line of duty.

Last fall, about 30 young men and women were able to go to college under this program. Unfortunately, this program is only available to the children of federal law enforcement officers.

The Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act, which Senator SPECTER and I introduced last year, extends these same educational benefits to the dependents of all public safety officers—in other words, not just federal—but also state, county and local law enforcement officers, and fire and rescue personnel—who have given their lives in the line of duty.

Under this bill, the Attorney General will administer a program which will provide up to \$4,485 per child, per year to attend a 4-year college. This is the same amount of educational assistance the federal government provides to veterans.

The Justice Department estimates the total cost for this year to be about \$300,000. What is more, the Justice Department already has the funds to pay for this \$300,000 within their current budget—so we will not need any additional appropriations.

It is critical that we remember the families of those officers who have made the ultimate sacrifice to keep our streets and homes safe. This bill is intended to allow the dependents of public safety officers to continue with their education as they would have been able to do had their parent not been killed or totally disabled in the line of duty.

PASSAGE OF S. 1605, H.R. 3565, AND S. 1525

Mr. HATCH. Mr. President, this week we have been commemorating Peace Officer's Memorial Week, in honor of those law enforcement and public safety officers who have died in the line of duty. As we remember those who have fallen in defense of the public safety, it is highly fitting that the Senate consider legislation to help save police officers' lives, and also to do all we can to comfort and assist the families and loved ones they have left behind. Thus, I am gratified by the Senate's action today in passing three bills to accomplish these goals.

The first of these bills is S. 1605, the Bulletproof Vest Partnership Grant Act. This bill establishes a matching

program to help States, units of local government, and Indian tribes to purchase armor vests for use by law enforcement officers. The lives of our law enforcement officers will be secured by ensuring that every police officer who needs a bulletproof vest receives one, providing an increased measure of protection to those who protect the public.

The FBI estimates that nearly one third of the 1,182 law enforcement officers killed by a firearm in the line of duty since 1980 would be alive if they had worn a bulletproof vest. The FBI also approximates that the risk of fatality to law enforcement officers while not wearing an armor vest is 14 times higher than for officers wearing an armor vest. In addition, the Department of Justice estimates that nearly 150,000 State, local, and tribal law enforcement officers, roughly 25 percent, are not currently issued body armor. This piece of legislation will save officers' lives by helping get vests to those who need them.

The second of these bills is the Care for Police Survivors Act of 1998, H.R. 3565. I was proud to introduce the Senate companion to this bill, S. 1985. This bill will strengthen programs available to the families of our slain police officers. For example, groups such as Concerns for Police Officers, more commonly referred to as COPS, will now be allowed to increase and improve their services to these families. Authority will be given to the Director of the Bureau of Justice Assistance to spend no less than \$150,000 out of the Public Safety Officers' Benefits program to support and enrich national peer support and counseling programs for families of police officers lost in the line of duty.

This act will also expedite the process of handling cases pending before the Public Safety Officers' Benefits Office by allowing the expenditure of PSOB program funds on outside hearing officers. Currently, survivors of fallen police officers have to wait entirely too long to obtain an appeal hearing for denial of benefits. By enacting this bill, we will make the process of helping these families less burdensome.

Finally, S. 1525, the Public Safety Officers Educational Assistance Act of 1998, will provide aid to the families of those federal law enforcement officers who are killed or totally disabled in the line of duty. By amending the Federal Law Enforcement Dependents Assistance Act, also known as the Degan Law, approximately \$4,500 per year in college assistance will be awarded to participants—the children and spouses of these great officers. Under S. 1525, the current program will be expanded to cover state and local public safety officers as well. I am a proud supporter of this program that will both promote and fund education for the small number of families of those who have given their lives or health while protecting our communities.